

WATER HYACINTH CONTROL

Water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) is an introduced water weed.

It can spread rapidly, sometimes covering the entire water surface, blocking canals, irrigation and drainage systems. It is also a threat to the ecology of natural rivers, lakes and wetlands.

The leaves transpire water into the atmosphere at a greater rate than a free water surface, causing severe water storage losses.

When it dies, the mass of decaying vegetation de-oxygenates the water, killing fish and other water animals. It also makes the water unfit for human or animal consumption.

It is a declared plant throughout the state and may not be imported or kept, even in a home aquarium or garden pond. Any plants found must be destroyed.

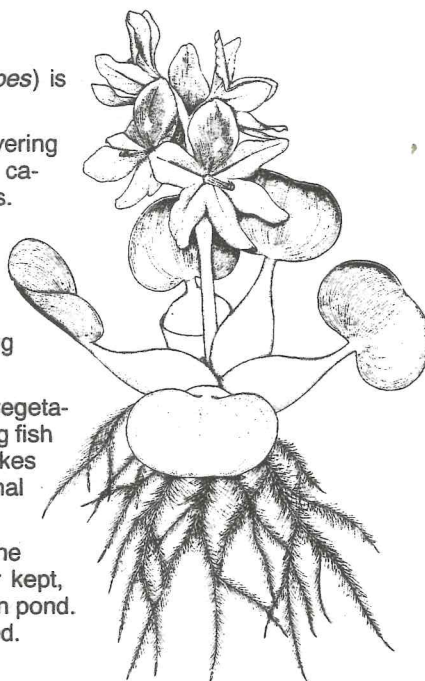


Illustration courtesy of Tasmanian Department of Agriculture

Water hyacinth is a perennial aquatic plant. It is free-floating in deep water but will take root in mud.

It forms smooth, hairless, shiny leaves which may be either long and narrow or almost round. At the base of each leaf is a bulbous swelling filled with large air cells to aid buoyancy.

It forms brightly coloured flowers during late summer. The flower heads each contain up to eight individual funnel-shaped flowers. These have six blue-purple lobes with a yellow mark on the uppermost.

After flowering the heads bend under water while the fruit develops. Large numbers of seeds are produced in each fruit. These may remain dormant for many years.

The main means of spread is vegetative reproduction; new plants are formed rapidly on horizontal stems (stolons). These break allowing groups of independent plants to float off.

Infestations are frequently caused by people who dump unwanted fish pond and aquarium plants in lakes and rivers.

Control

Biological control	Under investigation, but unlikely to be of relevance to W.A.	
Mechanical control	Aquarium and garden plants should be removed from the water, dried and burnt. Larger infestations in ponds may be removed mechanically, but every plant must be found and destroyed. This can be very slow and tedious.	
Chemical control	Spray larger infestations between November and February when the plants are actively growing.	
Reglone®	COVER SPRAY: 5 - 10 litres per hectare water surface. KNAPSACK: 10 ml/litre water Add wetting agent 1:600 parts spray mix	Several applications may be required to kill missed plants and seedlings.
2,4-D amine		Use limited by risk of spray damage to adjacent ornamental, vine and vegetable crops
Glean®		Trials are in progress

Further Information

For advice on water hyacinth control, contact your nearest Agriculture Protection Board district officer.